

Pathways to Development encourages children to develop interests in the arts and sciences

You may be living with the next Wynton Marsalis, Bette Midler, Gregory Hines, Georgia O'Keeffe or Albert Einstein under your very own roof. But you might never know it if that child doesn't discover and develop interests in the arts or science. Pathways to Development is a program run by the Youth Campus to give children in care a path to explore new ideas and activities. Pathways offers Cook County youth in foster care free opportunities to develop interests through:

- Weekly classes in the performing and visual arts, music, martial arts, acrobatics, dance and science
- Free tickets and passes for families to attend professional performances and cultural institutions
- Opportunities for students to perform and exhibit their work
- Special workshops and summer camps
- A mentoring program that matches Pathways students with mentors based on interests

"Exploring interests is a part of normal childhood development. Children in care should have fun opportunities to explore interests and enhance their

personal growth. Pathways helps them do that," said program developer Tim McNeilly.

Pathways to Development is designed on the

premise that young people with interests show greater success in other areas of their lives.

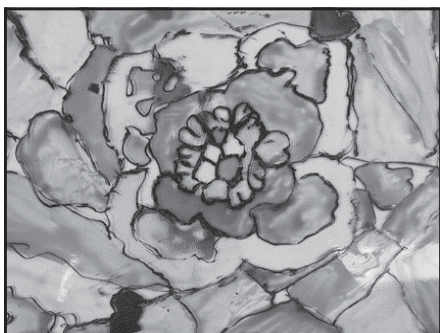
"Class makes me feel good inside because I had something fun to do instead of doing things that were bad," said one youth participant.



In the classes, children come into contact with new ideas and techniques taught by some of the Chicago area's finest arts and science groups. Among the providers are established museums, music organizations, theater groups and dance ensembles. More than 700 students take classes under trained professionals with hundreds of others taking part in workshops and other outings. Pathways also requests tickets to cultural events and distributes 1,000 tickets and passes to families each year.

Courses are offered in many locations around Chicago and in some locations in the suburbs. The Pathways classes are free and available to children in care of the state between 3 and 18. Once a child is enrolled, he or she can continue in the programs after adoption or guardianship.

Foster parents can contact Pathways at 312-243-0533, ext. 330 to get more information or to enroll a child in programs. The organization is developing a new web site at www.funpathways.org. Enrollment will be open January 5-16 for the Spring session, which starts February 2.



Cook North teen battles hearing loss and wins at school

Joshua, a recent high school graduate, was born with no hearing in his left ear, severe hearing loss in his right ear, and has a speech impediment. Joshua says his disabilities were compounded by the fact that his parents were drug addicts who neglected him as a small child. At age nine, he was placed in a residential care facility, and later that year was placed in the care of a relative. However, the placement was unsuccessful and that same year, Joshua returned to the residential care facility.

In school, he remained in special education classes throughout 9th grade, and was diagnosed with various behavioral and emotional disorders. Joshua continued to flounder in school until one of his high school teachers, Sharon Duncan, took a special interest in him that would help change the course of Joshua's life.

Shortly after age 16, he reconnected with his maternal grandmother, Bernadine Conlan, and was placed in her care. Joshua credits her with providing

stability to his life. He began to flourish in his personal life and at school. By his senior year, he was taking all regular classes. He served as president of the student body and Peer Jury, and captain of the school's baseball team.

Now, the student who once floundered is finding academic success at Wright Junior College. He hopes to attend Northern Illinois University in the future and wants to major in Broadcast Journalism for sports.

Cook North foster parents plan to celebrate Christmas in June

The holiday season is hectic for everyone and even more so for foster and adoptive families. Shopping, parties, and visiting family are often compounded with having birth family visits and the managing kids' holiday stress. Most of the parents' efforts go into making sure children have a safe and joyful holiday, often not taking time out for self-care or time with spouses and other significant adults. The Northeast Foster and Adoptive Parent Association has found a unique way of making the holiday season a little less stressful for the grownups.

Every year, rather than trying to squeeze in another holiday gathering, the group commits to making the holidays successful for their families and postpones

their holiday activities until June. As a reward for all of their hard work during the holidays, they treat themselves to a night out. This past June, 45 members of the association treated themselves to a night out at Medieval Times where a great time was had by all...all adults!!!

"The association does something like this every year. It was a really nice night out for the foster and adoptive parents," said Betty Johnson, Northeast Foster and Adoptive Parent Association member. This year the group will once again venture into a "Kid-free Zone" to celebrate the holiday again in June. Everyone deserves two Christmases.

The Northeast Foster and Adoptive Parent Association



meets at 10 a.m. on the third Thursday of each month at the Sherman Park Public Library, located at 5440 S. Racine. All parents through foster care, adoption and guardianship living in Chicago's North and southeast sides are invited to become members. Contact Donsetta Blakely, President, at 773-778-7445 for more information.

Cook South Support Group keeps meeting parents' needs with trainings and information

The Cook South Support Group consistently draws a large audience for its monthly meetings. At a recent meeting, foster and adoptive parents met Lillie Winston of the Chicago Public Schools. Winston provided an overview of services that are available through the Chicago Board of Education and how to secure services for children who need them.

Cook South's educational advisors, Marguerite Chapman and Yasmina Sefiane-Johnson, encouraged foster parents to take an active role in their children's education. Foster parents should meet the teachers, know the

expectations of the teachers, and monitor the child's academic progress. Cook South foster parents who need educational services should contact the child's worker and the educational advisor. Ms. Chapman works with the Chicago Public school system and can be reached at 773-371-6000. Ms. Sefiane-Johnson works with the suburban school system and can be reached at 708-210-3051.

The December meeting took a break from the everyday routine and turned into a "red carpet" event. The group hosted the First Annual Foster Parent Choice Awards. The event gave foster

parents the opportunity to recognize the caseworker, mentor, agency, or community person who made the challenging job of

foster parenting easier. Nominations were collected at previous meetings. All those individuals assured the audience "that it was an honor just to be nominated" as they waited to hear their name called. And the winner is.... *The winners will be featured here in an upcoming issue.*



Ellyse Worrell of DCFS coordinates the Cook South support group

Cook Central's Humboldt homes check out Family to Family

On Saturday, October 18, 2003, the first community event was held to introduce Family to Family to the foster parents of the Greater Humboldt Park Community. The Greater Humboldt Park Community is comprised of the following communities: Hermosa, Avondale, Logan Square, West Town and Humboldt Park. Seven private agencies and DCFS Cook Central worked together on this initiative. The agencies are: Catholic Charities, LSSI, VOA Childserv, Casa Central, Association House, YOS and DCFS.

To make this event a "foster parent friendly" occasion, the group provided childcare and

lunch to all those who attended, along with training hour credits. The event began with discussion questions about the foster parents' opinions of the current status of foster care and how it could be improved. In addition, the agencies wanted to know from them what services or supports they needed to continue being foster parents.

During the lunch hour, staff played a video introducing parents to the "Family to Family Program" and how it can improve outcomes for kids coming into the child welfare system. The agencies also shared some statistics regarding the numbers of minority children leaving the

Greater Humboldt Park Community and how neighborhood-based foster care could keep them in their community. Lastly, the group discussed the expectations that DCFS will have for foster parents to work together with birth families. The group was very receptive to these changes in foster care.

There were approximately 40 foster parent participants and they brought 46 children with them. The group was both English and Spanish speaking. The session ended on a high note with a raffle and a grand prize children's bicycle.

Cook County Training Calendar

FosterPRIDE In-Service Training

All licensed foster parents and adoptive parents are welcome to attend any or all of the PRIDE In-Service Trainings to enhance their skills and meet yearly training requirements.

Module 1 - *The Foundation for Meeting the Developmental Needs of Children* (Four 3-hour sessions = 12 training hours)

Module 2 - *Using Discipline to Protect and Nurture* (Three 3-hour sessions = 9 training hours)

Module 3 - *Child Development* - New module being written

Module 4 - *Child Sexual Development and Sexual Abuse* (Two 3-hour sessions = 6 training hours)

Module 5 - *Supporting Relationships Between Children and Their Families* (Three 3-hour sessions = 9 training hours)

Module 6 - *Working as a Professional Team Member* (Three 3-hour sessions = 9 training hours)

Module 7 - *Promoting Children's Personal & Cultural Identity* (Two 3-hour sessions = 6 training hours)

Module 8 - *Promoting Permanency Outcomes* (Three 3-hour sessions = 9 training hours)

Module 9 - *Managing the Fostering Experience* (Two 3-hour sessions = 6 training hours)

Module 10 - *Understanding the Effects of Chemical Dependency on Children & Families* (Five 3-hour sessions = 15 training hours)

COOK NORTH

Module

Irish Center

March 2, 4, 9 & 11 (Tue/Thu)	6:30-9:30 p.m.	1
March 23, 25 & 30 (Tue/Thu)	6:30-9:30 p.m.	2
Jan. 17 (Sat) & Jan. 24 (Sat)	9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m. 9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.	4

Little City Foundation

March 6 (Sat)	9 a.m.-4 p.m.	7
Jan. 13 & 15 (Tue/Thu)	6 p.m.-9 p.m.	9

COOK CENTRAL

Module

Circle Family Care

Jan. 10, 17 & 24 (Sat)	9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.	2
March 29, 31 & April 5	6:30-9:30 p.m.	8
Jan. 12, 14, 21, 26 & 28 (Mon/Wed)	6:30-9:30 p.m.	10

Association House - Spanish

March 27 (Sat) & April 3 (Sat)	9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m. 9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.	8
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COOK SOUTH

Module

Bethany Christian Services

Jan. 10 & 17 (Sat)	9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.	1
March 12 (Fri) & March 13 (Sat)	6:30 -9:30 p.m. 9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.	4

DCFS South Area Office

Feb. 7 (Sat) & Feb. 14 (Sat)	9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m. 9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.	2
Feb. 10, 17 & 19 (Tue/Thu)	6:30 -9:30 p.m.	6

Aunt Martha's

Jan. 27 & 29 (Tue/Thu)	6:30 -9:30 p.m.	7
March 8, 9, 10, 11 & 12 (Mon-Fri)	6:30 -9:30 p.m.	10

DCFS Harvey Office

Feb. 3, 5 & 10 (Tue/Thu)	6:30 -9:30 p.m.	8
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Educational Advocacy

Two 3-hour sessions = 6 training hrs.

It is mandatory for one foster parent in each family to attend Educational Advocacy Training in order to be re-licensed. Educational Advocacy Training is offered following each Foster PRIDE/Adopt PRIDE training and many additional times. This six hour course covers information foster parents need to know so that they can advocate for their foster children's educational rights and needs.

COOK NORTH

City Colleges of Chicago

March 1 & 3 (Mon/Wed) 6:30 - 9:30 p.m.

Irish Center

March 27 (Sat) 9:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Operation ABLE

Feb. 17 & 19 (Tue/Thu) 9:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

COOK CENTRAL

Association House (Spanish)

March 13 (Sat) 9:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Circle Family Care

March 10 & 15 (Wed/Mon) 6:30 - 9:30 p.m.

Sequin Services

Feb. 16 & 18 (Mon/Wed) 5:30 - 8:30 p.m.

COOK SOUTH

Ada S. McKinley

Feb. 17 & 19
(Tue/Thu) 9:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

DCFS South Area Office

Feb. 24 & 26 (Tue/Thu)	6:30 - 9:30 p.m.
Feb. 28 (Sat)	9:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.
March 15 & 17 (Mon/Wed)	6:30 - 9:30 p.m.

Youth Empire

March 27 (Sat.) 9:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

DCFS Harvey Area Office

March 27 (Sat)	9:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.
March 1 & 3 (Mon/Wed)	6:30 - 9:30 p.m.
March 23 & 25 (Tue/Thu)	6:30 - 9:30 p.m.

All classes are
coordinated by
Harold Washington
College in Chicago.

Call 312-553-5821
or -3031 to register.